

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 223

FEBRUARY 10th, 1944

THE REBUILDING OF COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

Bold and Adventurous Plans

A remarkably bold and forward-looking plan for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral and its environs is announced by the Anglican and Free Church authorities concerned. It represents one of the most adventurous developments in the life of the British Churches in wartime.

As an essential part of the scheme but outside the Cathedral itself, there will be an interdenominational Christian Centre, with its own chapel adjoining the Cathedral, and through this Centre the Anglican and Free Church leaders will co-operate in joint work to serve the whole community.

The scheme has been approved by the Cathedral Council and by the Coventry Free Church Federal Council. The architect is Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, and the plan includes a church with a central altar. The existing tower and apse which have survived destruction will be incorporated in the scheme, some details of which are dependent on the agreement of the City Council to the sale of a small portion of the site which is at present the property of the city. It is not proposed to issue any formal appeal at present, or indeed until after the war.

Statement by the Bishop of Coventry

The following statement on the proposals is issued by the Bishop of Coventry:—

"Now that plans for the rebuilding of our Cathedral have begun to take shape I want to explain to the people of Coventry and its Diocese what these plans are, and why we have made them.

A People's Cathedral for the New Coventry

"This is what we propose:—

(i) To rebuild the Cathedral as the central church of the Diocese. The Cathedral itself will naturally belong to The Church of England which will have the sole control of its services.

(ii) To build as an essential part of the Cathedral Scheme a Christian Centre of service to the community.

(iii) To set up an Endowment Fund to staff both Cathedral and Christian Centre.

(iv) The Free Churches to be invited to a full partnership in the Christian Centre with a pooling of resources in its staff personnel.

(v) A special Chapel of Unity attached to the fabric of the Cathedral would connect the Cathedral itself with the Christian Centre. This chapel, as a building and a place of worship, would belong to the Free Churches and the Anglicans together.

The Architect's Plan

"Sir Giles Scott's plan is the work of one of the great architects of England at the mature height of his power. He has designed the church round the central altar, in which the religious significance of the building lies. This is not a crank idea. It goes back to the very earliest days of the Christian Church, and it would make the Cathedral in its plan an expression of the best

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

An Agency of the British Government

30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

modern theology and ideas of Christian Liturgy of the present day.

"The altar is the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ for the world. Christians are drawn by that sacrifice to offer themselves to Christ and they kneel round the altar. But that altar is also a table where we break the bread and drink the wine with the risen Lord, as a communion or a fellowship of brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. The altar does not belong only to the Clergy; it belongs also to the people. Therefore, set it in the middle of a church and let the people gather round it.

"Our business then is to go out from there as a fellowship to witness to God's truth and give Christian service to others. That is the ideal we want this Cathedral to stand for. That is why, connected with the Cathedral in its worship, we want a Christian Centre of service for the needs of Coventry and its Diocese.

The Needs of Coventry

"Wave after wave of immigration over 20 years has almost overwhelmed the community sense of Coventry. War has brought into it a flood of strangers from the entire British Isles. The returning fighting man will hardly know its people. He does not know what place he may find in it. Coventry is a centre of the war 'Blitz'; it is undoubtedly the symbol of a post-war 'Blitz.' The problem of transition back to peace will be overwhelming for this unformed community unless we can set up some centre of Leadership. It is the Church's great chance.

"Eighty per cent. of Coventry are without membership of Church or Chapel. They are unrooted even in the secular community of which they form a part. Yet Coventry has shown itself capable of great loyalty and common service. There is a friendliness to the Church. There are fine men and women and young people ready to follow a lead. If they could see the Cathedral standing for a new Christian Leadership in an attack on all the problems we have to face together, they could be brought into the circle of Christ's action in Coventry.

Action by Anglicans and Free Churchmen in Partnership

"We just cannot tackle this eighty per cent. outside Christian Churches in isolation. The parochial clergy in Coventry are working superbly at their vital task of ministering to the people in their homes. But the life and work of the people very often lie outside the area of their parishes. The parish

priest, catering in isolation for his immediate flock, is overweighted by the immediate task of carrying on. There is, too, the major problem that in all State-controlled social organisations—in education, hostels, youth clubs and community centres—no one Church can have the right of entry. I find on all sides a readiness to ask for co-operation from the Christian community. 'But,' people say, 'you Christians must get together on a united front. Schism, party first, group consciousness, individual selfishness, vested interests, race and class destroy our life and weaken this great City. The Christian Church exists to break down barriers. Let Christians find unity, and in that unity bring us the faith and leadership to find our unity.'

"That is the challenge; this is our response.

"At the Christian Centre we shall provide for a Headquarters Staff of Anglican and Free Church men and women capable of detachment to tackle all these problems, to provide leadership and the linking up of workers, and to create a Christian public opinion and action beyond the bounds of the parish.

"Our scheme has been drawn up after consultation between Anglican and Free Church Leaders. It has already received the approval of the Cathedral Council and of the Coventry Free Church Federal Council, and each of these bodies has appointed representatives to collaborate in framing a constitution for the Christian Centre.

"In a Christian social attack Anglican and Free Churches in Coventry are already fully co-operative in will. Give that co-operation an instrument. Who is going to say it is wrong? The mass of the community will say it is entirely right.

Loyalty to the Anglican Church

"I write personally within the High Church tradition, of Hooker, Andrewes, Laud and the Catholic faith of the Prayer Book and of the Anglican Divines. The Cathedral is the central place of Anglican worship of the Diocese. Its worship centres on the Eucharist and it maintains the Anglican Liturgical traditions. At no point in this scheme do we go beyond our Anglican orders.

"Final forms of church unity are beyond our decisions. We wait with the rest of the community for God's guidance and the authoritative action which does not lie with us as a diocese. Strong in our own position and recognising our heritage, we can and should at the same time co-operate with fellow-Christians. This scheme provides for

co-operation. Within that co-operation the Anglican Church keeps its integrity.

Appeal to come later

"The energies of our people are focussed now upon the single end of victory, but when the time is right we shall appeal to you to help us in our great task of rebuilding."

The Response of the Free Churches

The following statement is issued by the President of the Coventry Free Church Federal Council:—

"The initiative taken by the Bishop of Coventry and the Provost towards closer co-operation is heartily appreciated by the Free Churches of the City.

"For years we have experienced here a definite unity in Christ, and we know that the present gracious move is actuated by a pure and fervent desire for the extension of the Kingdom of God. The offer made is most gladly accepted by us. The Chapel of Unity will help to richer fellowship in Christ, while the Community Centre for Christian Service will do much to widen and deepen the contribution of the Churches to the life of the people. The Coventry Free Church Federal Council, being informed by the Bishop and the Provost of the scheme, joyfully expressed general approval and appointed representatives to co-operate in working out details.

"We are confident that the publication of this great venture will thrill the hearts not only of Free Churchmen, so that they will confirm the approval of their representatives, but also of the people generally. Together we press on to make our City more nearly a City of God.

EARDLEY B. STRINGER,
President of the Coventry Free
Church Federal Council."

2nd February, 1944.

Provost's Description of the New Cathedral

The Provost of Coventry, the Very Rev. R. T. Howard, has written a description of the new Cathedral for the people of Coventry. He explains that the old tower and spire remain, and that the western part of the old nave (burnt out, but with walls still standing) will enclose a cloister garden. The altar of the rebuilt Cathedral will stand near the chancel steps of the old, the old apse will remain, and the seating accommodation will be "right and left" from the altar, over which there will be a majestic lantern tower.

The Provost continues:—

"The new Cathedral will seat 2,000 people comfortably. Wherever you sit you will feel at home and near to the centre of worship. In this House of God the Church of England can again establish at the heart of the diocese and at the heart of the city its own special form of worship and make its own special contribution to the religion of the English people. But people of all denominations will feel, as ever, that it is their building, too, and will be completely welcome, as heretofore, at its services, small or great.

"What is the Cathedral for? Let the Prophet Ezekiel answer: 'Son of man, this is the place of my throne, where I will dwell in the midst for ever.' 'Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His house.'

The Cathedral Christian Centre

"'From His house.' Go out from the Cathedral by one of the doors in the east wall, and you come into another enclosed green space, the Greater Cloister. On the left is the new Lady Chapel of the Church of England Cathedral. In front of you is an entirely new block of buildings—the Christian Centre—comprising an assembly hall, smaller halls and rooms for meetings and conferences and discussions, all so greatly needed. The purpose of this Centre is to be a kind of Headquarters of combined operations of the Church of England and Free Churches, where their people can meet one another and with all the various groups of the city, for fellowship and study and for planning to go out and serve the whole community of the city and diocese in every conceivable way. An endowed staff of expert workers, Church of England and Free Church, will take the lead in this campaign of Christian service.

"Linking the Christian Centre to the Cathedral is the Chapel of Unity, belonging jointly to the Church of England and the Free Churches. In this Chapel each denomination may hold services of its own ordering, or meet together for common prayer and praise under conditions agreed upon by the Free Church leaders and the Bishop. It will be the worshipping heart of the Christian Centre, and seed plot of deeper unity between all Christians."

A FINNISH TRIBUTE TO MURDERED DANISH POET

The following tribute to Kaj Munk appeared in the Swedish-language paper *Arbetarbladet* in Helsinki, Finland, on January 14th, 1944:—

A poet has died,
 shot—
 cast into the ditch of a country road
 by the hangmen of violence.
 O Poet, thy voice
 is heard no longer
 under the sacred vault of the temple.
 But the voice of thy spirit
 has not been hushed.
 Thou livest, O Poet.
 Thy thought
 cannot be slain by a bullet.
 It germinates, grows, matures.
 It lives yet in thy children.
 It lives yet
 in the depths of our heart.
 A poet has died.
 A flame has been kindled
 in the dark night of the North.

NORWAY IN 1944

Outlook for the Church

A Swedish paper, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, of the 21st January, contained a short review of the present position of the Norwegian Church based on information received from Oslo:—

"Norwegian ecclesiastical circles reckon that 1944 will be particularly difficult for the Norwegian Church, but the struggle will continue on the same lines as hitherto.

"Leading members of Midlertidige Church congregation have been forbidden to reside in Oslo. All bishops are still hindered in the fulfilment of their duties, either because they have been banished to other districts, or because they are forbidden to preach or hold meetings. About 20 clergymen are now under arrest, and about 50 more have been driven from home and banished from their parishes.

"In this connection too may be mentioned the many recreant 'clergymen' who have been forced on a number of parishes. Persons who lack both theological and general qualifications have been appointed as clergymen throughout the country, and have become an absolute nightmare as far as any church work is concerned. They deliberately act as tools of the Quisling organisation and take every opportunity of persecuting the Norwegian clergy."

Stricter Measures

Another report from a private source gave an indication of the continued efforts which are being made by the Quislings to keep down Church opposition. It said:—

"Dean Andera of Beisdalen was dis-

missed and banished to another district eight months ago, but the authorities evidently did not think these measures adequate. It is now reported that he is also forbidden to attend any church service or religious meeting.

"This remarkable measure probably emanates from some local National-Socialist authority, and reveals the true face of the National-Socialist ideology. It provides Norwegians with fresh confirmation of the relations between National-Socialism and Christianity."

Quisling Society

It is now many months since we first heard of the proposed formation of *Kristen Samling*, a Quisling organisation to give comfort to Quisling church people, who felt lonely because faithful Churchmen would have nothing to do with them. *Aftenposten*, a Swedish paper, reported its first meeting recently in these words:—

"*Kristen Samling* (Christian Union) held its first meeting in Oslo on January 23rd. Barby declared that evil rumours said *Kristen Samling* was a new organisation and a kind of new church, but this is not true. *Kristen Samling* is not an organisation with members and a membership record, but a Christian fellowship with a great aim: Norway and the world for Christianity."

Lonely Quislings

The conditions which led to the formation of the above society were illustrated in *Svenska Dagbladet* of January 28th, where one of the Quisling Bishops, Zwiilmeyer, speaks of the way he and his colleagues are treated. It is important to remember here that the words "loyal" and "State clergy" refer to the Quislings:—

"Bishop L. D. Zwiilmeyer complains, in a report on conditions in his diocese, about the difficulties of 'loyal' clergymen in the more or less open struggle against the church opposition, especially about the resistance of women to the State clergy. The Bishop stresses that even members of the N.S. get married in registry offices, and afterwards receive the blessing of opposition clergymen. Important members of the N.S. are even buried by 'disloyal' clergymen simply to please the women of the family. Zwiilmeyer does not expect any improvement, and concludes that it is impossible to found a church on an N.S. basis, as the N.S. is a political organisation."